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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000964

SIPDIS

NSC FOR DR. SAMORE
ENERGY FOR DAS MCGINNIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/24/2024
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [PTER](#) [ENRG](#) [ETTC](#) [TRGY](#) [SENV](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA ENTHUSIASTIC AND RESPONSIVE ON
NON-PROLIFERATION ISSUES IN MEETINGS WITH WHITE HOUSE
SPECIAL ASSISTANT

Classified By: CDA Tom Kelly for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: A delegation led by White House Special Assistant and WMD Coordinator Gary Samore visited Argentina for consultations on August 10, generating significant goodwill and enthusiasm among Argentine interlocutors to continue bilateral consultations and cooperation on key nuclear arms control and energy cooperation issues. Influential GOA Cabinet Chief Minister Anibal Fernandez was pleased to receive news of a forthcoming invitation to President Kirchner to attend a March 2010 White House Summit on Nuclear Security. Argentina MFA officials, meanwhile, welcomed Samore's description of U.S. policy toward U.S.-Russian nuclear arms reduction, Iran, North Korea and the NPT Review Conference in April 2010. MFA officials and Norma Boero, President of the National Atomic Energy Commission, agreed to receive a U.S. expert team to discuss the Additional Protocol and GNEP. Argentine Energy Secretary Cameron accepted the proposal from Samore and McGinnis for a binational commission on non-carbon energy, urging that it focus on concrete near-term results. He also said he would consider attending the GNEP Executive Committee meeting in Beijing in October and that Argentina would consider joining GNEP as a full partner if its concerns were addressed. End Summary.

12. (U) Dr. Gary Samore, Special Assistant to the President and White House WMD Coordinator visited Argentina August 9-10 for consultations with GOA officials and public outreach on USG non-proliferation and arms control objectives. He was joined by Ed McGinnis, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Energy for Corporate and Global Partnership Development, and by Robert Peters, Office of the Secretary of Defense and Representative of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for WMD.

13. (SBU) Chief of Staff to Argentine Foreign Minister Taiana, Alberto D'Alotto, hosted Samore for a private dinner August 9 and then the following day hosted Samore and his delegation for a working meeting and lunch. (Note: Both Foreign Minister Taiana and Vice Minister Taccetti had expressed their interest in consulting with Samore; FM Taiana was traveling with President Kirchner (CFK), however, and VFM Taccetti, scheduled to host Samore, was called away at the 11th hour to support CFK's August 11 visit to Caracas.) D'Alotto was joined by Ambassador to the United States Hector Timerman, the Director of the North America Desk Antonio Trombetta, and by the MFA's two key arms control authorities, Rafael Grossi, Director General for Political Affairs, and Gustavo Ainchil, Director for the Office of International Security, Nuclear, and Space Affairs (DIGAN). Also participating were Norma Boero, President of the National Atomic Energy Commission (CNEA) and Dr. Raul Racana,

President of the independent Nuclear Regulatory Authority (ARN). Samore and party were joined by Charge d'Affaires Kelly and Political Officer (notetaker).

¶4. (C) Samore began the MFA meeting by emphasizing his perception that the United States and Argentina shared many of the same concerns and objectives on international nuclear non-proliferation issues. He noted that President Obama and his team had identified Brazil and Argentina in South America as being among a dozen or so countries worldwide with which we needed to work most closely. Samore gave an open and nuanced account, clearly appreciated by D'Alotto and his colleagues, of U.S. thinking on difficult challenges including North Korea, Iran, the NPT Review and the newer international instruments and partnerships now in place to support non-proliferation and arms control objectives.

¶5. (SBU) For their part, the Argentine participants emphasized Argentina's firm commitment of a quarter century to foregoing nuclear weapons, its concurrence on the importance of the international non-proliferation regime, and its ongoing plans to expand nuclear power generation. Grossi, Ainchil and CNEA President Boero described in some detail the challenges but also the halting progress toward implementing a political decision by President Kirchner and Brazilian President Lula to integrate Argentina and Brazil's nuclear industries.

Argentina's Areas of Concern

¶6. (C) The GOA officials assembled at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were positive and appreciative of the outreach

throughout the day. (Note: Trombetta and many mid-level MFA officials also came to Dr. Samore's presentation later that day at the Argentine Council for International Relations, CARI.) Grossi inquired about the new Administration's views on the variety of voluntary initiatives and partnerships developed under the Bush Administration in this area, including the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP), and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT). Samore noted that the Obama Administration had studied the initiatives and had found that each remained a useful mechanism for focusing multilateral action on key issues. He pointed out that President Obama had endorsed the PSI and the GICNT in his April Prague speech, and called for their further institutionalization of the initiatives.

¶7. (C) DOE DAS McGinnis described the collaborative and energy-focused agenda of the GNEP and shared information regarding China's forthcoming invitation to Argentina to attend the GNEP Executive Committee meeting in Beijing in October. McGinnis emphasized that GNEP would not in any way prejudice Argentina's continuing use and development of its heavy water reactors, evidenced in part by Canadian and South Korean membership in GNEP. Samore conveyed that he had just agreed in the preceding meeting with Energy Secretary Cameron (paras 12 to 17, below) to send a U.S. team to Argentina to discuss the country's concerns about the scope of the GNEP preamble and its relationship with the IAEA.

¶8. (C) Minister Grossi requested a description of Obama Administration views on the U.S.-India Civilian Nuclear Agreement, sharing the longstanding GOA concern that the arrangement had diminished the force and legitimacy of the NPT. Samore recognized Argentina's concerns and noted that many arms control experts now in the Obama Administration had also voiced concern at the time. Nonetheless, Samore said, the Administration had determined that the cost to the important U.S.-India relationship would be too high to consider a reversal. Moreover, the Administration was determined to ensure that there was no precedent set by the India case and was emphasizing this in its diplomacy regarding other proliferation cases.

¶9. (C) The Argentine side also invited a discussion of the Additional Protocol to the NPT. Samore described his conversations in Brazil on the topic, which squared with the Argentines' own understanding. Boero over lunch and then Regulatory Agency head Racana, in an aside, both expressed the concern that the cost and technical requirements of AP implementation would be too great. Grossi emphasized, however, that these legitimate implementation questions did not represent an Argentine rejection of the AP. His government had not staked out an ideological or theological position against the AP and had been surprised in the past by Brazil's strong stand. Still, because of the mutual commitments of the Brazil-Argentina Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC), the GOA had to continue considering the Brazilian perspective before it could move forward on the AP. Boero and Grossi agreed to Samore's suggestion that a US team of experts could meet with Argentine experts to discuss implementation of the Additional Protocol.

Forthcoming Invitation to President Kirchner

¶10. (C) With the MFA and then in a short meeting with Presidential Chief of Cabinet Anibal Fernandez at the Casa Rosada, Samore shared news that President Obama would soon send President Fernandez de Kirchner an invitation to a March 2010 Summit on nuclear security issues. Argentina, Samore said, was one of four Latin American countries included, and the White House hoped that CFK would attend.

¶11. (C) Samore emphasized to Minister Fernandez the extremely positive nature of our bilateral dialogue on non-proliferation and described Argentina as an excellent partner. Fernandez reiterated Argentina's commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and its dedication to the international non-proliferation regime.

Secretariat of Energy

¶12. (SBU) Prior to the MFA meetings, Samore, McGinnis and

Peters, accompanied by Charge, ESTH Counselor and Political Officer (notetaker), called on Energy Secretary Daniel Cameron. Cameron also included Boero and Racana of the nuclear energy (CNEA) and nuclear regulatory (ARN) agencies respectively, along with a third agency responsible for the actual construction of plants (NASA). He included a large number of staff as well.

¶13. (SBU) Samore led off by describing a U.S. proposal to launch a binational commission on non-carbon energy, to include nuclear energy, to be headed by Department of Energy Deputy Secretary Daniel Poneman on the U.S. side. DAS McGinnis described the initiative further as an opportunity for both the United States and Argentina to identify practical mechanisms to contribute to both countries' low carbon-emitting sources of energy, including nuclear energy.

¶14. (SBU) Cameron responded immediately and favorably to the proposal, saying Argentina would participate. He identified Juan Legisa, the Secretariat's Coordinator for Strategy, as the GOA POC, and said that eventually Argentina would probably need to have two primary sub-groups involved since renewables and nuclear energy involved somewhat distinct sets of officials. Cameron also underscored the importance of identifying some concrete near-term outcomes from the process. He explained that Argentina had entered into many such binational agreements but that they often fell into disuse after producing little of consequence. DAS McGinnis concurred on the importance of making the binational commission results focused.

¶15. (C) The other issue raised by Samore was to encourage Argentina to respond favorably to the forthcoming invitation from China to participate in the October Executive Committee

meeting of GNEP. Cameron said that he probably would attend, but also noted that the country remained an observer rather than partner.

¶16. (C) Although inclined to join GNEP, Cameron said, Argentina continued to have concerns about the scope of the GNEP preamble and whether it in some way diminished the role of the appropriate multilateral body, the International Atomic Energy Agency. Moreover, he said, Argentina remained concerned that a body like GNEP might one day move toward restricting the type of heavy water reactor technology used in Argentina. (Note: Cameron explained that the current construction of Argentina's third nuclear power plant, Atucha II, and a planned fourth one, would continue with the Canadian heavy water technology, but that when it developed plans for its fifth plant, Argentina would probably shift toward the global standard to ensure against fuel supply, technology and other challenges. Cameron and then Boero explained that the country had held preliminary conversations with Areva, Rosatom, Mitsubishi and Westinghouse. End Note).

¶17. (C) Samore and McGinnis addressed both GNEP concerns, with Samore emphasizing that Argentina's decision on its nuclear technology was a sovereign decision. If it continued to develop heavy water facilities, the United States would continue to view Argentina as a committed non-proliferation partner. McGinnis emphasized that GNEP had no institutional bias against the technology and that both Canada and Korea, with significant heavy water industries, were members. On the GNEP preamble, Samore offered to send a technical team to Argentina before the Executive Committee meeting to work through the GOA concerns. Cameron immediately accepted this offer as well.

Public Outreach -----

¶18. (U) Samore presented a talk on the Obama Administration's views on nuclear non-proliferation during the afternoon of August 10 at the prestigious Argentine Council for International Relations (CARI). The event was well attended, with over 70 diplomats, GOA officials, academics, students and journalists in attendance, and the questions raised during a 45-minute exchange were well considered. Issues raised included the U.S.-India nuclear agreement, U.S. views on Israel's nuclear weapons status, "red lines" toward Iran and next steps on North Korea. Several audience members praised Samore's candor and detailed responses.

¶19. (SBU) Samore also conducted a 40-minute interview with Argentine defense and security issues magazine "DEF." The

interview covered much the same ground as the CARI talk, with questions about U.S.-Russian nuclear weapons negotiations, North Korea, Iran, and U.S. views on Argentina's role as a contributor to global non-proliferation efforts. Embassy is seeking to get for Samore an early draft of this article.

¶20. (U) Press coverage of the visit was positive, focused on Samore's White House role on non-proliferation and arms control. A Telam wire service pieced quoted Samore at the CARI event as describing Argentina as a "strategic partner" on non-proliferation with whom the United States had "developed good working relations." The press described Samore voicing interest in bilateral cooperation to further develop nuclear energy.

Embassy Comment -----

¶21. (C) Although Argentina will still incline toward the "global south" on some particular issues of the evolving non-proliferation regime, it remains on most points a strong and steady supporter of our points of view. Samore's visit, following on President Obama's policy statements, was highly welcomed in Argentina. Government officials working on non-proliferation and arms control issues are clearly

inclined to overcome current differences in policy wherever possible. We believe the positive public and diplomatic outreach from the Samore visit will also pay dividends in other areas, as the Argentines perceive the value we place on working with the GOA and on understanding and addressing its concerns. End Comment.

¶22. (U) Dr. Samore and DAS McGinnis cleared on this message.
KELLY